

APPENDIX C-3

Gils Conference Survey Methodology

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GILS CONFERENCE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

1.0. INTRODUCTION

On November 13 and 14, 1996, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) hosted the 1996 GILS Conference. Over 200 people attended the conference. The investigators developed a survey instrument to be completed by participants at the GILS Conference. The survey offered the opportunity to collect information to gauge respondents knowledge and awareness of GILS related policy and technologies. The investigators that the self-selected participants at the Conference represented primarily Federal agency staff who were knowledgeable and interested in GILS. Respondents completed the survey early in the first day of the conference so that investigators could assess existing knowledge about GILS rather than knowledge gained from the Conference. A total of 181 GILS Conference participants completed the survey. Appendix D-3 contains a copy of the survey instrument.

2.0 A SURVEY AS A RESEARCH TECHNIQUE IN SUPPORT OF THE PROJECT GOALS

This research technique solicited information from a set of people who were knowledgeable and or interested in GILS. Although not sampling the entire population of those knowledgeable and or interested in GILS, the survey reflected a purposeful sample, designed to meet the information needs of the evaluation framework's five dimensions and three perspectives. The investigators designed the survey to capture user perceptions and expectations concerning themes and issues pertaining to GILS.

3.0. CONFERENCE SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the 181 respondents, 78% worked in a Federal agency, 9% worked for a state or local government, and the 13% identified work settings that included private non-profit and for-profit organizations. The respondents involvement with GILS included a number of different responsibility areas and reflected different areas of expertise. Tables C3-1 and C3-2 summarize respondent demographic and other information.

Table C3-1
Conference Survey Demographics:
Respondents' Involvement with GILS

Area of Involvement With GILS	N	%
Implementors	81	39
GILS Record Creator	46	22
User	39	19
Policymaker	19	9
Technical Standards Developer	5	32
Information Reseller	4	2
Integration/Interoperability	2	1
Trainer/User Support	2	1
Other	8	4
Total	*206	**99

Respondents marked multiple choices so N exceeds the 181 completed surveys.

**Total does not equal 100% due to rounding

Table C3–2
Conference Survey Demographics:
Fields In Which Respondents Worked

Setting	N	%
Records Management	67	34
Information Resources Management	35	18
Library/Information Center	29	15
Public Information	19	10
Program Office/Project Management	10	5
Computer Systems	8	4
Archives	7	4
Chief Information Office	6	3
Legal/Legislative	4	2
Software Developer	3	2
Sales/Marketing	3	2
Research and Development	1	1
Procurement/Contracting	0	0
Other	8	4
TOTAL	*200	**104

*Respondents marked multiple choice so N exceeds the 181 completed surveys.

**Total does not equal 100% due to rounding.

4.0. CONFERENCE SURVEY QUESTIONS

The survey asked respondents to assess, in a quantitative manner, key GILS policy issues. Survey respondents used a Likert-type scale, (from 1–5 in which 1 indicated Very Familiar and 5 indicated Not Familiar) to assess familiarity with GILS policy documents. A second Likert-type scale (from 1–5 in which 1 indicated Strongly Agree and 5 indicated Strongly Disagree and a 6th category of “Don’t Know”) asked respondents to express opinions about GILS. The investigators included 17 questions concerned with key issues related to GILS.

Included in the conference survey were two questions which asked respondents to identify a favorite online alternative to GILS when locating government information. These questions allowed the investigators to learn of user-based choices for accessing government information and the reason why this choice was a favorite. The survey also included a qualitative question in which respondents could state any comments, issues or topics of interest to the investigators.

5.0. CONFERENCE SURVEY DATA COLLECTION AND DATA ANALYSIS ACTIVITIES

The investigators pre-tested the survey instrument with members of the evaluation team and with project advisory group members prior to its use at the GILS conference. The investigators distributed the Conference survey early during the first day of the GILS Conference. The investigators designed the opportunity to survey respondents to occur prior to any conference panels or presentations in order to prevent these events from modifying participant opinions about GILS. Attendees completed the one-page survey and returned the forms to the investigators.

Investigators used a database program to enter and store data collected from the survey for subsequent manipulation. To verify accuracy in data entry, the investigators randomly selected 20 surveys (approximately 10% of the total) and reviewed their corresponding database entries. Descriptive statistics were the primary out from the survey questions. Output included mean and mode for each question.

6.0. LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Using a survey early in the study provided the investigators with a mechanism to gauge key issues for additional examination through subsequent data collection activities.

6.1. Limitations

The investigators were aware of the limitations in using a survey as a data collection technique for evaluation purposes. As with any survey, each respondent may interpret questions on the survey differently from others respondents, generating data that may be skewed due to user perceptions. The study team discussed at length, during its pretest of the survey, how to minimize this outcome. The investigators felt that the incidence of this problem had been minimized by rewording any question that appeared to have ambiguity in its meaning but recognize that this factor can never be completely eliminated.

6.2. Conclusion

The thoroughness with which respondents answered the survey questions enabled the investigators to use this data collection technique effectively. The high response rate (181 out of 200+ registrants) provided the investigators with a broad-based survey of user knowledge and opinions about GILS related policy and implementation experiences.

